

SHIPS OF THE SAGINAW

We always are pleased to review in these pages books which are written, edited or published by members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society. Such works are, we believe, likely to be of interest to our other members, and even more so if they deal with a particularly obscure portion of lake shipping history which otherwise might remain unknown to persons outside the specific locale involved.

We are indeed pleased to have received a copy of Vessels Built on the Saginaw - Volume 1 - Commercial Vessels, which has been published by and for the support of the Saginaw River Marine Historical Society. This 156-page softcover has been edited (read "written"!) by longtime T.M.H.S. member Ralph K. Roberts, of Saginaw, Michigan, together with David D. Swayze, of Mt. Pleasant, and Donald Comtois, of Bay City. In the words of its editors, it is "an annotated listing of commercial vessels built on the Saginaw River and around Saginaw Bay", and accordingly it includes vessels constructed by a number of very famous shipyards, including those of James Davidson, Frank Wheeler and William Crosthwaite.

The majority of the material in the book came from the editors' own files, and all of the numerous photographs are from Ralph Roberts' extensive photo collection. The editors have done an exemplary job of using only rare and unusual photos, carefully avoiding those views which have been published widely in the past.

Apologies are made for the fact that this volume has been produced on a home computer, photocopied, and then spiral-bound between cardboard covers, but the format does not in the slightest detract from the value of the book as a major reference resource. Not only are there details of the ships themselves, but also several appendices, including maps of the Saginaw River system showing the locations of the places mentioned, the numerous shipyards and also assorted wrecks which remain in the area.

In orderly series of boxes for each vessel are given official number, type of ship, renames, date and place of launch, builder and hull number, hull dimensions together with Gross and Net tonnage, and a brief history of the vessel. The ships are listed in alphabetical order and, in usual lake fashion, are listed by last name when the name of the ship honoured a person. The only anomaly to this system, and we must avow that it is a somewhat confusing one, without major precedent of which we are aware, is that vessels whose names begin with "City of" (and these yards built a number of those), are filed under the last word in the name. Hence, CITY OF GLASGOW appears under "Glasgow", not under "City", and CITY OF BANGOR is found under "Bangor".

Nevertheless, this volume is a major addition to the base of lake marine historical data, and we have been unable, at first review, to note any major errors of fact in the text. We most certainly recommend this volume to anybody interested in lake shipping history, and particularly in boats built in the Saginaw area, whether of wood or steel hull. As the current book is specifically subtitled "Volume 1", we assume that further volumes are to be expected, and we shall await their appearance with great interest.

Members wishing to acquire Vessels Built on the Saginaw should address the Saginaw River Marine Historical Society, 3123 South Concourse, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, U.S.A. Please remit U.S. \$12.95 for each book ordered, plus U.S. \$3.00 for packing and shipping. Details for bulk orders may be obtained from the publisher.

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Stuck for a Christmas gift for any of your shipwatching friends? You might wish to consider a gift membership in T.M.H.S.!

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